"IT SEEMS TO BE THE FATAL FATE OF SIMULATION THEORY THAT SIMULATION ENDED UP DEVOURING THEORY ITSELF"

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IN THE DELIRIUM OF THE SIMULATION: BAUDRILLARD REVISITED

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NOTHINGSNESS, EMPTINESS, AND NIHILISM

An exzerpt from In the Delirium of the Simulation. Baudrillard revisited.

Radical thinking is always at the violent intersection of meaning and non-meaning, of truth and non-truth, of the continuity of the world and the continuity of nothingness. Ever since a Cretan said that all Cretans are liars, we no longer know whether he is telling the truth or whether he is lying. For Axelos, the logical paradox here becomes paradoxical logic, whereby the discourse turns against itself and loses its truth (Axelos 2023: 134). Truth as a game of revelation and concealment is preserved and lost, becoming problems and questions, focal points and dwellings of the world's error. Or the true is ultimately that which has absorbed all the energy of the false: simulation. Unlike discourse, which relies on the assertion that there is something and not nothing in order to guarantee an objective and decipherable world, radical thinking relies on the illusion of the world, on the fact that there is first of all nothing and not something. It at least strives for the status of illusion by re-establishing the non-truthfulness of facts, the non-designation of the world, and by putting forward the opposite hypothesis that there is first nothing and not something. Nothingness is the potential of existence for absence and, analogous to the quantum vacuum, for the absence of energy. In this sense, for Baudrillard, things only ever exist *ex nihilo. Ex nihilo in nihilum*; that is the cycle of nothingness. Baudrillard mentions Ciroan's statement here: If life has meaning, then we are all mistakes, and he should have added that this is perhaps also true on a cosmic level. Francis Galton, a cousin of Darwin, speaks of the marvellous form of cosmic order expressed by the law of the frequency of error. It is thinking in discontinuities, for which noise, chaos and noise are essential. Discontinuities, which in turn, however, come to nothing

without continuities, without structures, systems and orders. A thinking of the zero. Zero is not the beginning or the end of the numbers, but the middle (of the negative and positive number series). Only when the zero-point field of the quantum vacuum is left do things emerge that have properties or characteristics.

In this context, quantum physicist Carlos Rovelli, echoing the Buddhist Nagaryuna, speaks of an empty structure whose emptiness is in turn empty—it at least has nothing substantial about it, but is also not merely indeterminate, but is characterised by an abundance of relations (Rovelli, 2016). Something can be inscribed in the void. In quantum theory, the Aharanov-Bohm effect shows that there is no space that is empty of effect. Every empty space is not really empty, but is interwoven and permeated by quantum systems that can appear as phenomena based on measurements. However, even if light behaves like the waves of a substance, no substance can be recognised anywhere, so that one must actually speak of waves of nothing. The structure is thus characterised not only by emptiness, but also by an abysmal in-between, which is characterised as relationality, but also has a genetic component, that of the event. Relational structures do not precede objects or subjects, nor do they not precede them, neither both nor one or the other, according to Nagaryuna. For him, one must forget autonomous substances as subjects or objects. Any subject or object that is attributed or denied emptiness here already misses its inexpressibility. This is neither an objectivist nor a subjectivist position; rather, old European positions that focus on being or non-being are no longer sufficient to describe a polyvalent and poly-contextural quantum reality of virtuality that can be developed beyond the law of the excluded third in the direction of an essentially more complex logic of "both and". Here the clearing opens up for a trans-classical logic (G. Günther), which opens up different reference perspectives, each of which allows other facts to emerge and at the same time the respective perspectives cannot simply merge into one another without logical contradiction. In addition to

superposition/superimposition, reference must also be made to idempotence, to the "both as well as, as well as, as well as …", whereby with regard to idempotence the focus is primarily on the function of the "and", i.e. on the insistence of conjunctions. The void cannot be determined positively; it is not a transcendental ego, not a god and also not a world substance. As a negatively (but not indeterminately) defined void, it can be written as a fourfold defined negation: it is neither, nor is it not, nor both (being and nothingness), nor neither (neither being nor nothingness). Subsequently, the following relations can be developed with Gotthard Günther in a trans-classical logic: the one or the other / both – both … and / neither – neither … nor / not all this and not even that (Günther, 2002). In this context, Deleuze speaks of the All-One, which totalises the Nothing. It is about the negative of a certain positive, not about some indeterminate emptiness. The negative has its positive, the positive its negative, and precisely because each has its opposite in itself, they can merge into one another and forever play the role of hostile brothers in history. Nothing and being are and are not identical. Everything that is emerges from non-being and runs aground there without this non-being being a foundation. Being-nothingness enters into the cycle of becoming (Deleuze, 1992).

It must be understood that this is not a purely subjective position, but a non-ontological explanation of reality, without falling into realism. Deleuze has also spoken of an error of metaphysics when it considers being as a higher being, instead of also thinking of it as a void or as a non-being. It is chaos that opens itself up to nothingness. For Baudrillard, nothingness has not only a negative but also a positive sense. In the negative sense, nihilism in a certain sense destroys everything that preceded it and everything that will follow it. "Nothing is Nothing is true": nothing is false; the answer to the question: Why? Life impulses are emptied, as are the ideas and ideals of metaphysics, religion and morality. Truth is only a form of error. Or, to put it another way, the game between truth and lies

resembles a battle of darknesses in a dark tunnel (Axelos, 2023: 219). While simulation, in its mania for perfection and illumination, attempts to eradicate nothingness with pure positivity, so that there is nothing outside the system, outside the system there remains nothingness (as a noun). For Baudrillard, nothingness is then the background against which things stand out. Nothingness is other than just a negation of not being. In this sense, the completion and overcoming of nihilism are simultaneous. A world of play emerges that inscribes itself into the simulative system of the productive annihilation of nothingness; play is the fleeing horizon on which simulations are brought into play and torn apart by seduction. The world of the game is only a prelude to the game of the world. Similar to Baudrillard, for Kostas Axelos there will be neither a being nor a nothingness in the future, because everything takes place in an intermediate realm of ambiguity, ambivalence, seduction and play. To turn it around again with Axelos: Nihilism nihilates being, allows being to become nothing. But nihilism also nihilises nothingness, insofar as it leaves the nihil unthought, and thus turns (positive) nothingness into nothingness. By nihilating both being and nothingness, nihilism also nihilizes itself. It is not just a matter of overcoming it, but simply of watching how it is defeated not by us or by something else, but by itself. Nihilism nihilises everything and thus destroys itself (Ibid.: 380).

The myth of the authentic and the true was one of the masterpieces and greatest traps of metaphysics, which gave rise to nihilism in the first place. As the successor to metaphysics in modernity with the negation of error and the negation of the thoughtful search in the name of the belief in certainty the subject and its existence are placed on the worm-eaten throne of thought (ibid.). The abstract concept of truth of modernity, which is also based on the abstract opposition of subject and object, whereby the one takes possession of the other, eliminates the third party as a stranger and encroaches on the objects, it empties the world; it has its ideal in the empty identity of the number (atom, ego).

Luhmann writes in a similar vein: "The subject defines itself as a subject in contrast to the object, and this is precisely the way in which it creates the difference to the object. In this case, however, the status of the world remains undefined and, above all, the difference between a subject and others remains unconsidered. Such a subject can neither occur in the world, for that would mean that the world reflects itself; nor could it be an individual that differs from other individuals" (Luhmann, 1998: 871).

With Michel Serres, intelligence is more objective and technical and has to do with the universe itself. Using the *gnonome*, an astronomical instrument of the Greeks, and mathematical models, Serres demonstrates the wisdom of an automatic reason that is coupled with a mnemonic technique and does not depend on a subjective cogito. It is a wisdom that is objective and automatic, and yet this wisdom is not autonomous, but it does not depend on a subjective cogito, but on an instrument that can be played more or less well. The space of time, the chronopedia, is the place where scientifically datable objects can be recognised. In this place, the objects are addressed by words that are able to mechanically modulate and articulate the reproduction of certain events. These are the words of mathematical language, a language that exists not only in temporal and spatial extension, but also massively. But science is no longer limited to dating only those objects that are considered objective and natural, such as the age of the universe, that of life on earth and the appearance of life forms. The same science can also begin to date soft objects such as cultures and civilisations, artefacts, techniques, languages, narratives, etc.; objects that were previously categorically considered cultural and not natural. The hardness of a technique or an instrument coexists with the softness of mathematical thinking in a projective and objective space of observation. Together they form a kind of reason that Serres characterises as automatic. The intelligence inherent in mathematics is objective intelligence. Subjectivity arises from the insertion of this objectivity into any of the locally

different and actually spoken languages. From this point of view, every language is an artificial intelligence that attempts to do justice to the capital stock of an objective intelligence, which for Serres is immanent and coextensive with the universe (Serres, 1991).

It becomes even more drastic with Baudrillard: in the eyes of the world, I am a machine for the production of emptiness. But the world has no eyes, so the emptiness I create is translated as essential—as an additional ingredient, as meaning—with me as the collaborator, as the performer. That this metastasising coagulation reinforces nothingness is to be expected: emptiness only takes shape through what surrounds it and achieves a strange vitality by absorbing materials into its perimeter without this surface even belonging to it, which is tantamount to repulsion.

This can be radicalised even further. There is also the aspect of the process. The dispositional properties of objects can be replaced by propositions that express the uniformity of the simultaneous occurrence of certain actual processes that are enveloped by an object or that envelop it (they are contained synchronously or diachronically in a dynamic force field). The identity or essence of an object, which thus always appears as the same to the subjects, is constituted by the gravitational (dynamic-differential) force field of the system that can observe its operations. Even a certain uniformity or regularity in the occurrence of these processes need not be regarded as a causal law (there are no causal laws of a temporal asymmetrical relationship of before and after at the level of non-linear processes), but as a problem of correlation or coexistence of the processes in question, so that interactions in simultaneity successively replace or at least complement causalities. In the scheme of causality, the complementary and circular path, characterised by the intra-action of fields, functions and multiple variables, is more than just neglected. Phenomena are now signs of each other

and not the consequences (or effects) of previous causes or facts. The resulting regularities may well be meta-stable enough to allow individuation without an underlying essence or substrate that could establish its identity through change as a processual individual or object, since identity is constituted by the surrounding dynamic-differential field of forces. Every subject or object is invaded by the quantum field, which attacks all structures and renders them incoherent. Chance and noise permeate all individual and collective structures, removing nodes from networks, driving fragmentation that extends from viruses to human communication. For Gilbert Simondon, the potential of noise is permanent, as individuation itself is incessant, and this is ensured by the pre-individual nature of metastability. Noise is metastatic, and it keeps moving from the register of determinacy towards indeterminacy; it points to the plasticity of morphogenesis and it names the potential of the system to infinitely change its original determinacy (Simondon, 2012). With Baudrillard, one could say that it enables the congestion of illusion. However, causal modelling, based on intervention and on the idea that intervention affects the future and not the past, does not completely disappear.

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